

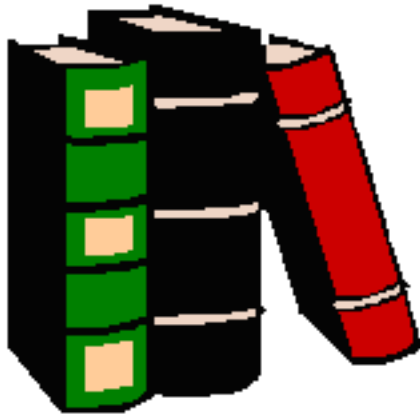
March 2002

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

An MCAS Primer for Students with Disabilities and Their Families

All students are capable of learning at a level that engages and challenges them, and every child in Massachusetts with a disability is entitled to receive a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) which meets his or her unique needs. Some students with disabilities are able to succeed in school without "special education" so they would not have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). However, they may require some supportive services or accommodations and may have what is called a Section 504 Plan. This name comes from a federal law known as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that offers students with disabilities both services and accommodations that are necessary for the student to participate fully in the life of the school.



MCAS Tests & Students

All students, including those with disabilities,

Testing Accommodations

Standard accommodations that may be requested are changes in the routine conditions under which students take MCAS tests. These involve the timing or scheduling of the test, the setting, how the questions are presented and how the student responds or provides answers. Here are a few examples of possible accommodations:

- The test is given in short intervals or at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical needs
 - The test may be administered individually or in a small group
- The test questions may be presented in large print or Braille
 - The student may dictate his/her responses to the test administrator.

Non-standard accommodations are modifications in the way the test is presented or the student responds that may alter what the test measures. Teams should be careful not to recommend non-standard accommodations when they are not needed.

"Non-standard accommodations" may be considered for a small number of students for whom:

- These accommodations are already part of the student's routine instruction

who are receiving an education at public expense, must participate in a statewide assessment program to determine if educational goals are being met. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests students on different subjects in different grades. School districts will look at MCAS test results as they make decisions about where additional support is needed to improve student performance. When students with disabilities are excluded from testing, or when their scores "don't count," their needs are less likely to be considered when decisions are made about how resources are spent.

Students with disabilities who have an IEP or who are provided instructional accommodations under a Section 504 Plan are eligible to use accommodations when taking MCAS tests. It is the responsibility of the each student's IEP or 504 Plan Team to determine how an individual student will participate in the MCAS tests for each subject. Any accommodations that the student needs for the MCAS must be spelled out in the IEP. Remember, the student and the parents are part of this team. The decisions made by the team cannot be overridden by some higher authority.



- No other access to the test exists.

Some examples of non-standard accommodations are interpreting through American Sign Language, allowing a student to dictate to a scribe or record answers on audiotape, allowing the student to use a calculator in non-calculator sections of the math test, or spell-check when using a word processor for composition.

Alternate Assessments

A small number of students may be unable to take standard MCAS tests, even with accommodations, due to the nature and severity of their disabilities. These students will be designated by their teams to participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment. The MCAS Alternate Assessment is a portfolio: a collection of information about the student's accomplishments throughout the school year that is assembled by the student's teacher. The portfolio may include samples of the student's work, instructional data on the student, photos of activities, videotapes and other supporting information linked to instruction in the subject being assessed. The portfolio should document how well the student has demonstrated her knowledge and skills related to the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that are measured by the standard MCAS tests.

Students may be considered for alternate assessment if they require substantial modifications to instructional level and learning standards. A student can take an alternate assessment in one subject and the regular MCAS in another subject. Similarly, she can take an alternate assessment in a subject one year and the regular MCAS in that same subject another year. Parents should be in on the planning process for the portfolio and should examine it before they sign the title page. Parents can even do some projects

at home with the student that can be included in the portfolio. The portfolios are due in May but are to be a compendium of the entire year's work. The Department of Education provides resource guides and training for teachers who will be conducting MCAS Alternate Assessments.

For additional information, updates, materials, and participation guidelines, visit the state Department of Education's MCAS Alternate Assessment web page at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt.

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News & Information for the Disability Community

March 2002

AccessLetter

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

EZRide Shuttle Debuts with Access for All



The new EZRide shuttle service provides a **direct connection** between North Station and Cambridge for commuters with and without disabilities. EZRide runs Monday through Friday (except holidays) every 12 minutes from 6:30 to 10:45 a.m. and from 3 to 8 p.m. Major stopping points along the route from North Station include Lechmere, Kendall/MIT, University Park, and Cambridgeport. All EZRide vehicles are painted an easily recognizable blue and are fully accessible to riders with disabilities.

By providing a more convenient connection between the MBTA Commuter Rail and major Cambridge employment centers, EZRide encourages greater use of public transportation by Cambridge-bound commuters. EZRide increases mobility and access for Cambridge residents, both within Cambridge and

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City Manager, Human
Services*

Commission for
Persons with
Disabilities

Michael Muehe,

between Cambridge and Boston. This new travel option furthers Cambridge's ongoing efforts to reduce congestion, improve air quality, support economic development, and preserve quality of life.

EZRide is open to the public for \$1.00 a trip, with a half-price fare for seniors, children accompanied by an adult, and people with disabilities. Many commuters to Cambridge will be able to ride the service for free with a sticker from an EZRide-sponsoring employer, including Amgen, Biogen, the City of Cambridge, and many others. EZRide is also open to anyone with an MIT ID Card. More detailed information about EZRide is available online at www.ezride.info or by calling the EZRide hotline at 617-8-EZ-INFO (617 839 4636).

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Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- March 6** **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2-3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or woman@braintrust.org for more information.
- March 6** **Transitioning Out of the Patient Role** is a free six-week group for women who have lived under the label of "patient" and want to move away from that identity and get on with their lives. This first meeting is open to new members; after that the group will be closed. Meets 6-7:15 p.m. at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street. Do not wear perfumes or strong scents. For additional information page Diane Loud at 781-226-7097 or contact The Women's Center at 617-354-8807 or womctr30@yahoo.com.
- March 6** **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- March 6** **Navigating CRLS: How Special Education Programs Support Students** is an informational session for parents sponsored by the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) Office on Special Education (OSE). Jed O'Connor, teacher in charge of Special Education at the high school will moderate a panel of CRLS faculty and students, 7-8:30 p.m. in the Library at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway. For more information, contact Marcia Duran at 617-349-6424 or email marcia_duran@cps.ci.cambridge.ma.us
- March 11** **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)**, an evening workshop for parents sponsored by Federation for Children with Special Needs. Includes overview of new IEP with emphasis on IDEA 97, access to the general curriculum, writing curriculum-based measurable annual goals, and the state's new special education regulations. In Georgetown, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- March 11** **Effective Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the MCAS Testing System** is an evening workshop for parents sponsored by Federation for Children with Special Needs. It covers accommodations available to students with disabilities taking the standard paper and pencil version of MCAS as well as information on the MCAS Alternate Assessment. In Marblehead, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- March 12** **Legislative Reception at the State House** Grand Staircase Hall, in Boston, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. This annual event is hosted by the Mass. Developmental Disabilities Council and is always a great time to visit with your Representatives and Senators about legislation and funding affecting the lives of people with disabilities.

March 12-13 Community Access Monitor in Beverly, MA at the First Baptist Church, 221 Cabot Street. Learn how to help your community become more accessible by signing up for this workshop presented by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD). Two-day program, 9 am - 4:30 pm, covers regulations of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB), the ADA Standards for Accessible Design and hands-on practice taking measurements during site surveys. Fee is \$15 for consumers, \$75 for professionals; lunch included both days. Registration DEADLINE is two weeks prior to the event if you are requesting accommodations (large print, Braille, sign language interpreters), otherwise it is one week. For more information, contact Bruce Bruneau at MOD, 617-727-7440 voice/TTY or 800-322-2020 voice/TTY. This is a scent free event; please do NOT wear perfume, after-shave, cologne, etc. This Training will be repeated around the state at various places:

- April 3-4 Falmouth
- May 8-9 Bellingham
- June 5-6 Ludlow
- September(TBA) Andover
- October 1-2 Natick
- November 13-14 Roxbury

March 13 Access to General Curriculum is a workshop for parents about diverse learning styles and modifications of content, delivery of instruction and performance criteria that allow students with disabilities to more fully participate and have success in the general curriculum. The workshop is presented several times a year, this one in Concord, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. For more information contact the Federation for Children with Special Needs at 800-331-0688.

March 14 CCPD Monthly Meeting - 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor conference room, 5:30 -7:30 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

March 14 Stroke Support Group at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge, 6-7:30 p.m. For more information contact facilitator Beth Dabek at 781-622-1433.

March 14 What Parents Need to Know about Special Education Advocacy: History and Basic Rights Update is a seminar for parents presented by the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) Office of Special Education (OSE). Martha Ziegler, founder of the Federation for Children with Special Needs will speak, 7-9 p.m. at the Kennedy School, 158 Spring Street. For more information, contact Marcia Duran at 617-349-6424 or email marcia_duran@cps.ci.cambridge.ma.us.

- March 14** **Basic Rights** an evening workshop sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Covers general information about Chapter 766 and other state and federal special education laws to assist parents in the planning, decision-making, and monitoring of their child's IEP (Individualized Educational Program). *Materials are available in Spanish.* In Wakefield, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- March 15** **Welcoming Persons with Hearing Loss into the Church** is a one-day practicum to help congregations become more sensitive to the needs of people with hearing loss, provide practical suggestions for communication and information on available technologies, and an introduction to American Sign Language (ASL). Presenters are a pastor and an educator of the Deaf. Advance registration is \$25 person / \$50 for group of 2-4. The conference is at Episcopal Divinity School, 99 Brattle Street in Cambridge, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. For more information and registration contact the Congregational Studies Office at 617-868-3450 or csoffice@episdivschool.edu.
- March 19** **Disability Policy Consortium** (DPC) monthly meeting, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, Boston. For more information call Robert Snierson, Chair, at 617-338-6665 voice / 338 6662 TTY or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- March 20** **Healthy Living in the Community: Strategies to Promote the Health of Adults with Disabilities Across the Lifespan** is a conference for individuals with disabilities, advocates and service providers. This one-day (10 a.m.-5 p.m.) event will be at the Holiday Inn Select near Government Center in Boston and is sponsored by the Mass. Department of Public Health, Office on Health and Disability. The DEADLINE for requesting accommodations is March 6. The conference is FREE unless you need Continuing Education Credit; then there is a fee of \$20. Registration is by mail. For more information contact AdCare Educational Institute, Inc. at 508-752-7313 voice or 508-754-0039 TTY. This is a scent free event; please refrain from wearing any scented products or perfumes.
- March 20** **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, 2-3:30 p.m. at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. See March 6 listing for details.
- March 21** **Effective Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the MCAS Testing System** is an evening workshop for parents sponsored by Federation for Children with Special Needs. It covers accommodations available to students with disabilities taking the standard paper and pencil version of MCAS as well as information on the MCAS Alternate Assessment. In Marlboro, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- March 24** **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC Somerville Area Office at 5 Middlesex Ave, in Somerville from 1 to 3:15 p.m. For more information contact Linn Morrill at Linn.Morrill@MRC.state.ma.us or 617-204-3723.

- March 24** **Access Advisory Committee for the MBTA** 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617 973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- March 28** **Support and Strategies for Women with Learning Disabilities** meets the 4th Thursday of each month from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Share experiences of educational success and failure and explore what types of educational environments might help you to achieve your dreams. For more information contact Kai Long at 617-354-8807 or wmnscntr@mediaone.net.
- April 3** **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- April 3** **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)**), an evening workshop for parents sponsored by Federation for Children with Special Needs. Includes overview of new IEP with emphasis on IDEA 97, access to the general curriculum, writing curriculum-based measurable annual goals, and the state's new special education regulations. In Shrewsbury, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- April 6** **Listening to Still Life: Metaphor and Touch** is a special afternoon session, 3:30-5:30 pm at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in conjunction with the currently running exhibit of impressionist still life paintings. Poems and objects to touch will help make the exhibition more accessible to people with visual impairments. For more information contact the MFA at 617-369-3302 voice, 617-267-9703 TTY or check the web site at www.mfa.org. The Museum is located at 465 Huntington Avenue in Boston.
- April 6** **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- April 10** **Effective Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the MCAS Testing System** is an evening workshop for parents sponsored by Federation for Children with Special Needs. It covers accommodations available to students with disabilities taking the standard paper and pencil version of MCAS as well as information on the MCAS Alternate Assessment. In Concord, 7-9 p.m. Call 800-331-0688 for details and registration.
- April 11** **CCPD Monthly Meeting** - 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor conference room, 5:30 -7:30 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

- April 11** **The Relationship Between Vision and Learning Difficulties: A Misunderstood Concept** is an evening seminar for parents sponsored by the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) Office on Special Education (OSE). Dr. Richard Laudon, Asst. Professor at the New England School of Ophthalmology, will speak at the Morse School library, 40 Granite Street, 7-9 p.m. For more information contact Marcia Duran at 617-349-6424 or marcia_duran@cps.ci.cambridge.ma.us.
- April 13** **Whitewater Rafting** through Class III and IV rapids on the Merrimac River in Lowell is a day trip that will be ASL interpreted for participants who are Deaf. This 8 a.m. -3 p.m. excursion is sponsored by Outdoor Explorations, a not-for-profit that promotes inclusion for people with and without disabilities through shared outdoor adventure and service. The fee for this one-day adventure is \$75. For more information or to register, call 781-395-4999 or check the web site at www.outdoorexplorations.org.
- April 20** **Youth Whitewater Rafting** on the Merrimac River in Lowell is a day trip mainly for young people of all abilities, ages 12-22. This 8 a.m. -3 p.m. excursion is sponsored by Outdoor Explorations, a not-for-profit that promotes inclusion for people with and without disabilities through shared outdoor adventure and service. The fee for this one-day adventure is \$75. For more information or to register, call 781-395-4999 or check the web site at www.outdoorexplorations.org.
- April 23-24** **Job Development for People with Significant Psychiatric Disabilities** is a two-day workshop presented by Institute for Community Inclusion for employment providers. It will cover psychiatric treatment and being part of the rehabilitation team, stress related to change and transitions, career planning and counseling for individuals who may feel overwhelmed by the concept of work, marketing and disclosure issues. The workshop will be at the Sheraton Commander Hotel, 16 Graden St. in Cambridge from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. The registration deadline is 3 weeks in advance of the event; the fee is \$110. For more information contact Mandy Gehrig at 617-355-5371 voice, 617-355-6956 TTY or amanda.gehrig@tch.harvard.edu.

Access Notice

The City of Cambridge does not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in electronic mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, part of the Department of Human Service Programs 51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139 We welcome your comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us! Read past issues on our website: www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~CCPD If you would rather receive your copy of **AccessLetter** electronically, please provide us with your e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-349-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or cthompson@ci.cambridge.ma.us